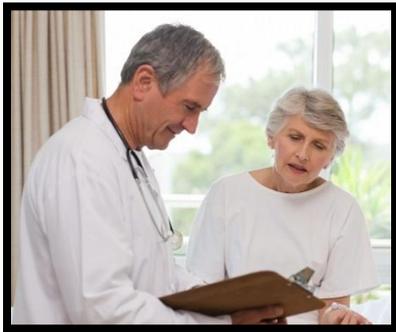


Be Prepared to Leave the Hospital

A Discharge Checklist



Before you go home from the hospital, be sure to have all the information you need.

Have you or a family member ever stayed in the hospital?

Once back home, did you know how to take good care of yourself? Or were you confused because you didn't know what to do? If so, you are not alone.

Many people leave the hospital and don't know everything they need to for good care at home. This may cause another hospital stay (readmission). And it can happen soon after going home or being discharged.

In this article you will learn:

- Reasons for a return visit to the hospital (readmission).
- Tips to help make going home easier.
- What you need to know and do before leaving the hospital.

When in the hospital, wouldn't it be nice to return home without having to worry about another hospital stay?

We want you to have what you need to get well after going home. This article covers ways to be ready.

Read it over. Keep it handy. Take it along to the hospital when you need it.

It even has a handy checklist to use.

Make sure a family member or caregiver knows about this list. It has important, simple ways to stay safe and healthy once you go home.

Did You Know?

Here are the top reasons for a return to the hospital:

- **Problems with medicines.** People taking many medicines may forget which ones to stop taking when given new medicines in the hospital. They may not be able to afford the new medicines or have no way to pick them up.
- **Not getting a follow-up visit with the doctor** within a few weeks of going home. It can be hard to get a visit right away. But the longer you wait, the higher your chance of going back to the hospital.
- **Not recognizing early signs of trouble.** And not knowing what to do if they happen.

Once you leave the hospital, knowing how to take care of yourself is very important. Make sure you find out all you can to help.

This includes getting:

- a list of your medicines
- any refills or new medicine orders (prescriptions) you need
- a list of your next doctor visits

Your doctor may also want you to have nurse visits or physical therapy at home. This is known as home health care.

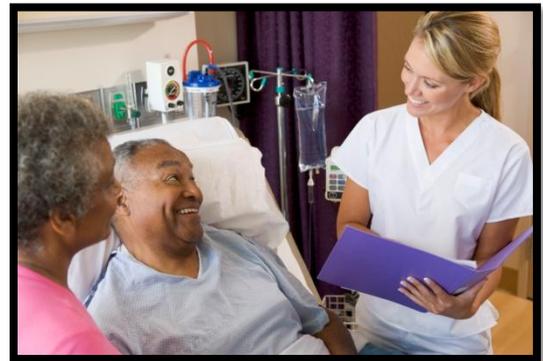
The 3 “Bs” of Discharge

When someone is in the hospital, the main concern is getting the best possible care. This means knowing exactly what to do when you go home, too.

These tips can help make going home easier.

1. Be Real and Honest

If you will need help at home, **make sure you have a family member or caregiver to do the things you can’t do yourself.**



Use the 3 “Bs” to help the discharge process go smoothly:

- Be real and honest.
- Be persistent.
- Be prepared.

Ask your nurse or doctor for a list of all the things you’ll need to do. Split it into things you can do yourself and things you will need help with. **Try to be honest about what you will and won’t be able to do while you heal.**

Make sure you have the right person to help. Have them come to the hospital while you’re still there to learn what to do at home.

The hospital may wait until the day you leave to teach home care to you or your caregiver. Sometimes it can be hard to learn from just one lesson.

Asking questions and having practice can make going home a lot easier. So ask about this.

2. **Be Persistent**

Don't settle for a plan you have doubts about. Ask questions. Review the options. Get answers. Then you can make an informed decision.

If you feel strongly about something, be sure to speak up. Don't be shy about asking for help and information.

3. **Be Prepared**

Work with the hospital and your caregivers to make a discharge plan together.

Talk about:

- your condition
- any changes during your stay
- what to expect (symptoms) while you get better
- the care you need and what to do

Important Tip

Take an active role in your care.

If you have questions, talk to your doctor or program nurse.

The doctors and nurses should work with you and your family to:

- arrange home health care, if needed
- have any equipment you need set up at your home
- give you or a caregiver a 24-hour phone number to speak to a doctor or nurse if needed
- make sure you have a safe way to get home
- make a follow-up doctor visit for you

You should also get a list of all your medicines. Ask about anything new (symptoms) to watch for once home. **Find out when you need to call the doctor.**

Get copies of your tests and health records. **Ask the hospital to send a copy of your discharge notes to your family doctor. Have one sent to you as well.**

Your Questions Answered

Before you leave the hospital, you should have a written list for your follow-up care. **Here are some questions to ask.**

1. Do I Need Home Health Care?

Your doctor may order home health care for you. **Sometimes the hospital may set this up. It may be based on your insurance and where you live.** In many hospitals, a social worker can also help you.

Here are a few tips on how to prepare to leave the hospital:

- Know the services or equipment your doctor wants you to have.
- Give the home health care company the phone number and address where you will be staying once you leave the hospital.
- Know when the first home health visit will be. Make it when your family, friends, or other caregivers can be there.
- Make sure your take-home supplies will last until your first home health visit.
- Get the name and phone number of the home health care company. Also, get the name of a contact person.
- Know when to expect any medicine, equipment or supplies to arrive at your home.

Important Tip

You may not know you need home health care until after you return home. In this case:

1. Let your program nurse know you need help choosing a home health care company.
2. Find out if your insurance company has a home health agency they want you to use (preferred provider).
3. Call home health care companies to find which one has the services you need.

2. Which medicines will I need to take at home?

Get a written list of all your medicines. **Tell your doctor about anything you were taking when you went into the hospital. Ask to go over any of these you should stop taking.**

You may have given this list to the nurse or doctor when you arrived. But make sure to talk about it when you leave. **Find out about new medicines, too.**

3. Will I have written instructions about my medicine?

Yes. You should get instructions on how and when to take your medicines. Make sure you understand them. It's easier to get the answers you need before you leave the hospital.

You may want to ask:

- Have my medicines changed from before I was in the hospital? Which ones, if any, should I stop taking?

- Why do I need a new medicine?

- What time of day should I take my medicine?

- Can this be taken with food?

- If not, how many hours should I allow before or after eating?

- Are there any foods or drinks I shouldn't have while taking this?

- How long will I need to take it?

- Are there any other medicines, vitamins or herbs I shouldn't take with this?

- Are there any problems (side effects) to watch for?

- If so, what should I do if I have any of these?

Care Transitions InterventionSM Discharge Preparation Checklist* <i>Before I leave the care facility, the following tasks should be completed:</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> I have been involved in decisions about what will take place after I leave the facility.	<input type="checkbox"/> I understand where I am going after I leave this facility and what will happen to me once I arrive.
<input type="checkbox"/> I have the name and phone number of a person I should contact if a problem arises during my transfer.	<input type="checkbox"/> I understand the potential side effects of my medications and whom I should call if I experience them.
<input type="checkbox"/> I understand what my medicines are, how to obtain them and how to take them.	<input type="checkbox"/> I understand what symptoms I need to watch out for and whom to call should I notice them.
<input type="checkbox"/> I understand how to keep my health problems from becoming worse.	<input type="checkbox"/> My doctor or nurse answered my most important questions prior to leaving the facility.
<input type="checkbox"/> My family or someone close to me knows that I am coming home and what I will need once I leave the facility.	<input type="checkbox"/> If I am going directly home, I have scheduled a follow-up appointment with my doctor, and I have transportation to this appointment.
<small>*Reprinted from Care Transitions Intervention[®] and was developed by Dr. Eric Coleman, UCHSC, HCPR, with funding from the John A. Hartford Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.</small>	

My Action Plan

Now that you know how to prepare to leave the hospital, what will you do?

Put a check beside each item and take this with you the next time you visit your doctor. Write in other steps you can take that your doctor tells you about.			
Action Items	I will do this	I might do this	I will think about doing this
Keep the Discharge Checklist handy in case I need it. Make sure my caregivers know where it is.			
Before leaving the hospital, ask about my medicines and if I will need home health care.			
Be sure to speak up and ask questions before leaving the hospital.			

Other Things I Can Do	I will do this	I might do this	I will think about doing this

Important Things to Remember

- If you leave the hospital before you know exactly how to take care at home, it could lead to another hospital stay (readmission).
- Use the 3 “Bs” to help the discharge process go smoothly. 1) Be real and honest. 2) Be persistent. 3) Be prepared.
- Before you leave the hospital, get a written list for your follow-up care. This should have directions for your medicines and your next doctor’s visit. Ask what other things you need to know to get well quickly.

Want to Learn More Now?

Call your program nurse today!

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